



UNITED STATES TRANSPORTATION COMMAND

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6 November 2007

The Honorable Carl Levin
United States Senate
269 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510-2202

Dear Senator Levin

Sir,

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to your questions concerning the strategic airlift fleet. I support the programmed strategic airlift fleet of 180 C-17s, extended by the Fiscal Year 2007 Bridge Supplemental to 190 aircraft, combined with 111 modernized and reliability improved C-5s. This fleet mix, augmented with the capability of the Civil Reserve Airlift Fleet (CRAF), provides sufficient airlift capacity to meet strategic and operational objectives during large-scale deployments, while supporting other high priority operations and forward deployed forces.

However, the outcome of the C-5 modernization program will have a direct impact on the capacity the C-17 will shoulder. Therefore, given the uncertainty surrounding the C-5 modernization program, I cannot recommend terminating C-17 production at this time.

Since you asked for my personal and professional opinion, I believe 205 C-17s and 111 C-5s is the correct fleet mix for the future. I reach this opinion by combining the analysis of available million-ton-miles per day (MTM/D) capability, fleet mission capable rates, the annual flying hour program, average cost per flying hour, total number of organic aircraft tails, available pallet capacity, and average age of the fleet. Taking these factors together, I personally conclude 205/111 is the sweet spot.

My top airlift priority, however, remains the recapitalization of our aging tanker fleet. The KC-X will not only fulfill its primary refueling role, but will multiply our transportation options. The strategic airlift fleet mix should be calibrated as necessary to account for this strategic necessity and to ensure we don't over-build overall organic capacity to the detriment of our commercial partners.

Thank you for considering my input on these very important issues. And as always, thank you for the outstanding leadership you provide our country and for the excellent support you provide the Armed Forces of the United States.

Sincerely

NORTON A. SCHWARTZ
General, USAF
Commander

cc: SecDef
DepSecDef
CJCS
CSAF
AMC/CC
OSD/LA
OCJCS/LA